

VZCZCXRO8225
OO RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHEK #1187/01 2691246
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 261246Z SEP 07
FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0220
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2284
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0717
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2688
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2071
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BISHKEK 001187

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/26/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ FOREIGN MINISTER KARABAYEV'S TRIP TO THE
UNITED STATES

REF: A. BISHKEK 1170

[1](#)B. BISHKEK 1001

BISHKEK 00001187 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Amb. Marie L. Yovanovitch, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Ednan Karabayev will travel to Washington and New York between September 26 and October 3. This is his first trip to the United States since becoming foreign minister in February 2007, and the first high-level visit since President Bakiyev and former Foreign Minister Jekshenkulov went to New York in September 2005. Karabayev will aim to show that U.S.-Kyrgyz relations are on a positive trajectory, with improved cooperation on a range of issues. Karabayev himself has worked to improve the atmosphere, reaching out to the Embassy, NGOs, and assistance implementers. He is anxious to mend some damaged fences, but he would also like to secure greater U.S. assistance, both to the Kyrgyz government and for investment projects. Karabayev is well aware that he will have to explain the current domestic political situation and developments on constitutional reform, and he seems convinced that the proposed constitution is a step forward.

A Referendum and Parliamentary Elections

[1](#)2. (C) Kyrgyzstan is heading into a tumultuous autumn. Feeling confident following a successful SCO summit in August, and with the opposition divided and ineffective, the Bakiyev administration is moving forward with plans to settle the debate over "constitutional reform" by pushing through a new constitution that suits its interests. Bakiyev will also likely dissolve parliament and call for fresh elections by the end of the year, with the expectation that his new political party (or a bloc of pro-presidential parties) would gain a majority. These moves raise the question whether Kyrgyzstan is moving toward democracy or toward managed democracy like its neighbors.

13. (C) In November and December 2006, Kyrgyzstan adopted two new versions of the constitution, both passed by parliament and signed by the president. On September 14, the Constitutional Court invalidated these versions on procedural grounds (see Ref A), and on September 19 President Bakiyev announced a national referendum on October 21 to consider a "new version" of the constitution and a new election code. Bakiyev's draft appears to strengthen certain presidential powers (e.g., the right to dismiss the prime minister and other ministers, increased control over local administrations) and weaken the parliament. In addition, under the Bakiyev draft, the next parliament will be elected entirely on a proportional basis by party lists. The draft election code sets the threshold for representation in parliament at 5% of the eligible voters (a potentially high threshold, with so much of Kyrgyzstan's working age population in Russia and Kazakhstan).

14. (C) It is widely expected that with the constitutional referendum announced, Bakiyev will next move to dissolve the parliament and call early elections, possibly as soon as December. Bakiyev has been laying the groundwork for a move against the parliament; he has blamed the parliament for stalled reforms and has criticized the "MP-businessmen" for being unaccountable. Other senior officials have asserted that election by party lists will help contain corruption in the parliament. Bakiyev also announced that he was forming his own political party, with the likely expectation that it would gain a majority in a new parliament. So far, some opposition figures have expressed only mild disagreement with the proposed referendum, and many current MPs appear more focused on gaining a place on a potential party list for their political survival than on details of the constitution draft or raising questions about the referendum procedure.

BISHKEK 00001187 002.2 OF 003

Our message should underscore that the new draft constitution, the referendum, and early parliamentary elections are internal Kyrgyz issues, but a balance of powers and transparent process are the hallmarks of a democracy and will determine Kyrgyzstan's reputation in the international community.

Expectations for the Base

15. (C) Developments over the constitution and the prospect of early parliamentary elections may have deflected public attention from Manas Air Base for the short term; however, President Bakiyev has refocused on the outstanding issues concerning Manas Air Base. Security Council Secretary Mamytov, Deputy Minister of Defense Oruzbayev, and Foreign Policy Advisor Ryskulov have all raised the need to resolve the outstanding issues (see Ref B), with Mamytov cryptically noting "some time still remains" to resolve them. Parliament was scheduled to hold committee hearings in September into the September 2006 collision between a U.S. tanker aircraft and a Kyrgyz passenger jet, but it appears that deputies are too busy thinking about how to save their seats to worry about the base. However, parliamentary elections may bring some renewed public scrutiny, especially if deputies find it useful to run against the base, as the one-year anniversary of Mr. Ivanov's death approaches. The Kyrgyz are also expecting to receive the results of the U.S. investigation and disposition of the case of the December 2006 shooting of Mr. Ivanov by U.S. airman. In June 2007, the Kyrgyz government proposed changes to the July 2006 Protocol of Intentions covering payment for access to, and use of, Manas Air Base. The Kyrgyz have asked repeatedly when the U.S. will send a team to Bishkek to discuss the proposed changes and related issues.

Millennium Challenge

¶6. (SBU) In August, the Millennium Challenge Corporation approved funding of Kyrgyzstan's Threshold Country Plan, which aims to support reforms in the judiciary, the procuracy, and law enforcement bodies. USAID, which will be in charge of implementing the plan, has been negotiating with the Kyrgyz over the terms of the final agreement. USAID is confident that the agreement will be signed, and then ratified by parliament, in the near term. Some Kyrgyz officials continue to view MCC in terms of direct support to the government. While we have explained repeatedly that the Threshold Plan will not entail a transfer of funds to the Kyrgyz government, successful implementation of the Plan would help Kyrgyzstan improve its chances to become eligible in the future for a full MCA compact.

What to Expect from Karabayev

¶7. (C) Karabayev is very pleased with the program and meetings that have been set for him in Washington and New York. His main objectives for this trip are fairly straightforward: He wants to show that U.S.-Kyrgyz relations are on a positive trajectory, and he wants to be able to demonstrate to others in the Kyrgyz government that there are tangible benefits for Kyrgyzstan to a strong bilateral relationship with the U.S. Since Karabayev's appointment, the Kyrgyz government appears to have made a strategic decision that strong relations with the U.S. act as a counterweight to pressure from China and Russia, but there are many in the government who remain suspicious of us, our motives, and our programs.

¶8. (C) Karabayev believes there are benefits to Kyrgyzstan of a strong relationship with the U.S., and we know he has taken

BISHKEK 00001187 003.2 OF 003

criticism from some in the government for being an advocate for the U.S. relationship. We consider him an ally -- and he is ready to work with us -- but he won't roll over on issues he does not believe are in Kyrgyzstan's best interests. Karabayev is a supporter of the air base on a strategic level. He will raise the need for the U.S. to provide information on the Ivanov case and send a team to Bishkek to discuss the June diplomatic note, but the Kyrgyz National Security Council has the lead on most base-related issues.

¶9. (C) A former professor of history and vice rector of the Slavonic University, Karabayev is an intellectual. He likes big ideas and wide ranging discussions. With his rumpled jacket, wavy hair, and affable demeanor, he can give the impression of an absent-minded professor, but he's extremely sharp -- and he can be pointed in his remarks, at times.

¶10. (C) Karabayev is also a Bakiyev loyalist, and, as such, he is confident in his position as foreign minister and expects to survive any cabinet reshuffles. Karabayev believes that Kyrgyzstan is moving in the right direction on a range of reforms. He sees the draft constitution as a necessary step, because it will give the president the power to get things done.

¶11. (C) In his meetings, Karabayev will seek ways to widen the scope of U.S. financial and technical assistance to Kyrgyzstan, but he won't always grasp our budget realities. He will come with a slew of investment proposals, which he plans to share also with the World Bank. Karabayev is also concerned about setting the right tone in meetings. Karabayev has told us, for example, that he hopes his meeting at DOD can establish a positive trajectory following the June 2007 meeting between President Bakiyev and Secretary Gates. Given the importance of personal relations in Central Asian politics, Karabayev may seek an invitation for President Bakiyev to Washington (or, alternatively, a visit by President Bush to Bishkek) as a way to bolster the bilateral relationship, but he has told us he would see how his meetings are going before deciding whether to raise this

topic.
YOVANOVITCH